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ABSTRACT

The problems, frustrations, successes, and failures met by the Roseneath Centennial Public School in Roseneath, Canada, while attempting to respond to the unique needs of the community it serves are described in this paper. The school staff planned and implemented a program in cross-cultural studies in order to reduce the friction between the members of the nearby Indian Reserve and the surrounding non-Indian community. The program was designed to expose children and parents to the various Indian cultures in order that the non-Indians would be more understanding and that the Indians would better appreciate their own unique heritage. Some specific objectives of the program were (1) to improve the Indian child's self-concept, (2) to create an appreciation of the various cultures inherent in the school population, (3) to develop a more accurate and unbiased approach to Canadian history, and (4) to create a vehicle for greater interaction between the school and the community. It was concluded that because of the distrust between the 2 groups and occasional negative influences from individuals outside both communities, a great deal of work still needs to be done through innovations in the areas of community involvement, basic philosophy, school culture, and curriculum. (HBC)

Mahjétah-win

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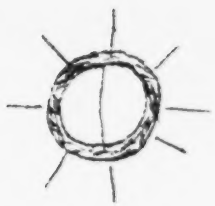

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A CROSS-CULTURAL PROGRAM

Presented by

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This paper deals with the problems, frustrations, successes and failures of one school's attempt to meet the unique needs of the community that it serves. The staff of the Roseneath Centennial Public School in Roseneath planned and implemented a programme in cross-cultural studies in order to reduce the friction between the member of the nearby Indian Reserve and the surrounding non-Indian community. The programme was designed to expose the children, as well as the parents, to the various Indian cultures in order that the non-Indians would be more understanding and the Indians would better appreciate their own unique heritage.

It is appropriate at this time that a short resume of the area and the school be included to aid the reader in better understanding the impact of the project on the community.

The community is situated on the south shore of Rice Lake and is mainly a farming area. The Alnwick Indian Reserve borders the community of Roseneath and it is in this village that the strongest biases may be found.

The Rice Lake area has for centuries been an important region to the North American Indians. On the north shore may be found the famous Serpent Mounds which served as a burial ground for tribes from all over the Eastern United States and Canada.

In 1834 the Federal Government purchased lands in the township of Alnwick in the Newcastle Area of Upper Canada in order to establish a reserve for the various nomadic bands of natives in the Belleville, Kingston and Gananoque area. These people, members of the Missisaugas, were converted to Christianity in 1826-7 and received into the Methodist Church. After these people moved into the Rice Lake area, the Methodist Missionary Society established a school to serve the community. The graduates went to the United States for further education.

During the ensuing years the township became more settles and some of the Band's lands were sold thus reducing the size of the Reservation.

It is interesting, at this point, to note that during the early years of settlement in Alnwick, the school at Alderville was the only one available and the children of the pioneers attended this school. This resulted in their acquisition of the Ojibway language as well as a basic education.

Despite efforts by the Missionaries and the Government to encourage the Indians to farm their lands, the members of the Band chose pursuits other than farming. They, themselves, attribute this to the nomadic nature of their forefathers, the Mississaugas. As a result, even today, in an area where the land is extensively cultivated, the Reserve lands stand out as laying fallow except where leases with non-Indian farmers exist.

Over the past century much distrust and suspicion developed between the residents of Alderville and Roseneath. In interviewing members of both communities one is at a loss to decipher the truth from legend, although both groups can give detailed accounts of wrongs suffered at the hand of the other group. These wrongs range in importance from stolen chickens and unpaid debts to stolen property and actual physical abuse.

Until 1967 the educational needs in the area were met by six one-room schools, one two-room school and an Indian Day School. Both groups sent their children to the secondary school in Cobourg.

In 1960 the Alderville Band entered into an agreement to have the students from Grades 5 to 8 educated at the schools in the town of Cobourg. This entailed busing these students twenty miles to Cobourg each day as well as paying tuition fees to the Cobourg Public School Board.

This arrangement proved to be most unsatisfactory to the residents of Alderville as their children fared poorly both academically and socially in the town schools. Unfortunately, there was no alternative available as the Day School was filled to capacity as were the township schools in the area.

In 1966 the Alnwick Township School Board decided to consolidate their one-room schools into a six-room elementary school with support facilities in the village of Roseneath. The Alderville Band Council was approached with respect to entering into an agreement to share the facilities and costs of this school. The Band Council refused to be involved in any way with the building of the school, although they did lease a portion of the site on a ninety-nine year lease. It was later discovered that this refusal was due to the experience of those children attending non-Indian schools in Cobourg and the distrust between the Band and Roseneath.

The Roseneath Centennial Public School opened in September of 1967 with a new Principal and five staff members from the one-room schools. A few days before school opened, the Township School Board was approached by the Band Council as to the possibility of allowing the children from Grades one to four attend the new consolidated school. The teacher hired by the Department of Indian Affairs to teach in the Alderville Day School had decided at the last moment that he was not interested in teaching another year in Alderville and had left for the East Coast. This left the Band without a teacher and without the time to hire one before school opened in September.

An agreement was entered into between the Band and the School Board whereby the Department of Indian Affairs would pay the tuition fees of the students and also a share of any future capital costs.

The following year was the key year for the new school. As well as attempting to develop programmes and courses in the school, the teachers also were aware of a need to make the integration of the various communities connected through the school operate smoothly.

Since the Principal was new to the area he was unaware of the deep-rooted prejudices that existed in the area. The children attending the school came from four distinct communities; Roseneath, Fenella, Burnley and Alderville. It was noted early in the first year that the children from each area tended to congregate together whenever possible. Through the use of small group activities and organized house league sports a rapport was developed between the students which erased, for the most part, these social barriers.

The Band members showed their approval of these efforts by cancelling their agreement with the Cobourg Public School Board of Education and arranging to have all the elementary school-age children on the Reserve attend the Roseneath Centennial Public School. The school was now integrated from Kindergarten through to Grade 8.

During these years the school staff was busily occupied with equipping the new school with the latest learning materials, upgrading their taching skills and professional qualifications. Although the staff was well experienced, only the Principal had qualifications beyond level one on the Elementary School Teachers' category scale.

The Chief of the Alderville Band sat on the Township School Board with full voting powers. He proved to be an invaluable ally as he was able to exert pressure from his office to expedite solutions to problems that existed concerning Band children. These problems were usually quite minimal, but through

the Chief they were quite quickly resolved.

After the formation of the County Board, the Chief was appointed as a consultant to the Northumberland-Durham County Board of Education. In this capacity he was still available as a liaison officer between the school and the Band.

Several teachers during the course of the years between 1967 and 1970 taught the topic "The North American Indian" as a part of their History or Social Studies courses. It became apparent that the Alderville people had almost completely lost any contact with their heritage. There were only a few members who still spoke Ojibway, no one practised the crafts and very few made any effort to display their Indian heritage.

The relationship between the Department of Indian Affairs and the school was minimal. A courtesy call once a year, a request for attendance records and an occasional memo concerning changes in the payment of fees constituted all contact between these parties.

In 1970 an addition was built to the school in order to add three classrooms and a resource centre. Even though the Department of Indian Affairs agreed to pay their share of these capital costs, there was little noticeable increase in the interest shown by the Department in the school.

The preceding information is meant to give the reader a clearer understanding of the social, physical and professional status of the Roseneath Centennial School as it existed in 1970.

In 1970, the teachers became more acutely aware of the identity problem facing the Indian children. It was apparent that these children were at a loss as to their place in society and their true heritage. Several teachers had taken the Indian-Eskimo Studies courses offered at Trent University and were able to recognize the identity problem that existed.

The school, in general, was becoming more involved in the community. This involvement was possible because the internal problems of organizing equipment and staffing had been solved and now the school was secure enough in itself to allow the community in.

The Principal had begun to discuss the matter with a former teacher and Band member, John Loukes, who was, at the time, the Chief Vocational Councillor for the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa. It became apparent that this identity crises was a common problem faced by the Native People across Canada. Mr. Loukes guided the Principal to some excellent articles and texts which outlined the Indian philosophy and his frustrations quite clearly. No overt attempts were made by Mr. Loukes to alter the school curriculum or change the school culture.

The Principal was satisfied that his staff was in a position to do something to counteract this problem. Professionally, they had grown immensely through Departmental and University courses, in-service work and steady guidance from the Principal. They now appeared to have the necessary skills and sensitivity to approach the problem.

Several staff meetings were held in order to seek solutions that would be effective in the school. Minor changes were made in some courses in order to accent the native contributions. Articles of Indian crafts were put on display in the classrooms. Unfortunately, due to budget restrictions, only a token effort could be made.

Early in June of 1971 the District Superintendent of Education for the Department of Indian Affairs, Mr. D. G. Scott, visited the school in order to view the addition and to complete his annual visit. During his visit he discussed the need for cultural enrichment for the Indian children. The state of the

school budget was explained and he agreed to pay through the regular tuition fees any expenses incurred in enriching the cultural aspects of the school. He offered some suggestions and a list of resources so these needs could be met. The staff was elated and immediately began discussing and planning the best approach to enriching the Indian cultural aspects of the school. It was agreed early in the planning that no attempt would be made to limit any portion of the programme solely to Indian children nor would any attempt be made to elevate the Indian children in status beyond what was rightfully theirs as members of the student body.

At this point, communications became the prime problem. It was impossible to free the teachers for planning during the school day and sessions after school were less productive and conflicted with the teachers personal commitments. As a result, planning sessions were scheduled for noon hours with the teachers meeting in two groups which later became known as the Primary group and the Senior group. The two groups met together on Fridays to share ideas and to discuss progress.

It was felt that an intensive thematic approach to the topic "The North American Indian" with emphasis on the cultural aspects would be most fruitful. Al subject areas were investigated as to their relevance to the theme. The teachers felt that it was important that the skill areas not be neglected or glossed over in order to accommodate the theme. As a result, mathematics was excluded from the theme as it proved limited in its application.

Materials were ordered through the school office; all materials were screened as to their content and relevance to the theme. Library books were chosen from a list supplied by the Indian-Eskimo Association. These books were considered to be the most factual and least biased of any available in Canada.

The Chief of the Alderville Band was involved in much of the planning and he offered a great deal of advise and direction.

Mr. Walter Currie, Director of the Indian-Eskimo Studies programme at Trent University, was also involved and was of great assistance in finalizing the aims and objectives for the programme.

After careful consideration and deliberation, the following list was accepted as the aims and objectives for the programme.

1. To develop a vehicle for the implementation of the P_1J_1 philosophy.

2. To make the Indian and non-Indian student aware of the unique Indian heritage and culture.

3. To improve the Indian child's self-concept.

4. To develop a greater understanding of the Indian culture in the total school population.

5. To create an appreciation of the various cultures inherent in the school population.

6. To boost the school spirit and school pride.

7. To develop a more accurate and unbiased approach to Canadian History.

8. To make the pupils aware of the contributions made by Indians in the development of the Canadian nation.

9. To make the pupils aware of the contributions being made by Indian people to our present society.

10. To create a vehicle for greater interaction between the school and the community.

Until this point the planning of the programme seemed to be moving smoothly and with few problems. Now serious problems began to appear and at one point they threatened to destroy the complete programme.

In the last week of June, the Alderville Band held an election and the former Chief and his entire Council were replaced by a new set of officers. This meant that the former Chief no longer held any power on the Reserve and would not be able to make any decisions nor offer any advice except as an individual. Attempts by the school to meet with the new Council were thwarted by the Council as they felt they were busy enough clearing up the affairs of the Band. Finally it was agreed that a special Council meeting would be held in September in order to listen to the school's proposal.

During the months of July and August the staff went to various locations in order to take summer courses. Each member attempted during the summer to develop his own aspects and approach to the programme as well as to seek out resources and resource people. Within a few days after the resumption of school in September, the teachers were again meeting in their groups to plan co-operatively and to share their new ideas. The enthusiasm for the project seemed to have grown during the summer.

The Principal and one of the teachers, armed with the planning to date and the overall enthusiasm of the staff, met with the new Band Council. It was apparent early in the meeting that the Council was hostile and cool to the idea of the school attempting to influence the values of the Band children. The planning stages, the resources, the constant advice of Mr. Currie and the sincerity of the teachers was stressed. The Council still seemed hostile although they began to show some interest.

Finally, one of the Councillors asked why the project was still underway when the representative of the school, who had called a special meeting in July, had said the project was cancelled and had advised them not to take any further part in it. The Principal explained that no one from the school had been in contact with the Council and that no other individual had the right to represent the school.

During the ensuing dialogue it was found that a trustee had mentioned the project at a Board meeting and a few lines had been printed in the local paper. A vocational teacher in the Cobourg area had seen the reference and decided to use the project as a theme for a paper at Trent.University. He made no contact with the school but went directly to the Band representing himself as a staff member. Since the Council was not familiar with some of the new staff members they accepted him at face value. This individual, having taken two courses at Trent, felt he was an expert on Indian Affairs and proceeded to talk about the project without any concept of what the project entailed. After several hours of detailed discussions, the Council finally agreed to support the school and to assist in any manner possible. Their support proved to be the key to whatever success was enjoyed by the project.

A table had been organized in the school staffroom on which was kept a supply of material which was designed to lead the reader to conceptualize the Indian philosophy, life style, and aspiration with respect to the Twentieth Century. This material was used as the basis for discussions and staff workshops.

Two beginning teachers were engaged in the Primary grades. These teachers presented another problem. They came to the school with no teaching experience, no concept of what the project was attempting to achieve and a multitude of problems

associated with any teacher's first few months in a classroom.

The Principal realized that they would have to be oriented quickly to the basic structure of the school, its basic philosophy and the expectations to be made of them as teachers. They would also be expected to take part in the project and be involved in the final stages of planning. This resulted in another problem as this workload proved to be a most heavy burden for both teachers. The Principal allowed them greater leeway in the daily administrative and supervisory duties of his office. Late registers, cluttered classrooms and poor discipline procedures were tolerated for a time.

Eventually it became necessary for the Principal to discuss with one of these teachers the need for routines and for having certain administrative details completed on time.

No one but these teachers can accurately assess the true mental and physical strain they suffered during October and November of their first year of teaching. Fortunately, by the end of October, they had become full participating members of their group and were functioning as true professionals in the classroom. They later expressed their satisfaction with having been able to cope with the burden and grow with it.

Timetabling proved to be a difficult problem with the senior group. Each of the four teachers had chosen an area best suited to his expertise and experience. These involved science, history, geography and crafts. It was planned that the four classes representing Grades four through eight would rotate, spending a pre-determined length of time in each area.

Since the grade levels and the basic skills varied, each teacher had to develop a number of diverse approaches, content areas and resources related to his topic.

Once the programme began in November it became

apparent that the timetable consisting of eight quarter days to be spent in the four areas was not working. The teachers and the students did not have time to complete research or assignments before being required to move on to the next session. The timetable was modified to allow for only four time slots. Thus each class spent a whole afternoon in one area and Friday was free to complete assignments and to evaluate the work done.

Again it was shown by the students that even this timetable was not adequate. They complained of just getting interested in a topic and then having to leave it. By Friday they had four uncompleted assignments and insufficient time to complete any.

A final modification was introduced in order to alleviate this problem. The classes were brought together on Monday morning and each teacher outlined the topics and activities that would be available in his classroom. The students then elected for themselves where they would go each afternoon. Only two conditions were imposed, one was that they must choose three of the four options and the other was that no more than thirty-five pupils would be accepted on any given day in one area. These controls insured that no teacher was unfairly overloaded and that each student received a fair chance at getting into the more popular areas such as crafts.

The students particularily enjoyed being allowed to opt out of an area which was of little interest to them. It also allowed them to spend more time in areas of high interest where they could sharpen their skills and through success develop a stronger and more positive self-image.

As the project developed it seemed to create its own enthusiasm and the school became a very busy building with many interesting and varied projects on a wide range of topics being conducted simultaneously. The Primary group imposed a more

structured format on their project, in keeping with the decision making ability of the younger students. Each of the five teachers chose an area and prepared materials, activities and presentations related to this topic. The classes were divided into five groups so that there was an even representation from each grade level in each group. The groups were assigned names and the group leaders given a timetable to follow. An hour each morning and two hours each afternoon were devoted to the thematic study. The groups rotated receiving instruction from each teacher in turn.

This experiment in cross grading and primary rotary seemed to work quite well and had few adverse effects on the children.

Displays of authentic Indian crafts, speakers of Indian descent, Indian artwork and field trips added to the activities in the classrooms.

The Principal felt that the aims and objectives of the project were being met by the teachers. A noticeable increase in enthusiasm and interest in Indian culture was apparent in the student body. An effort to reach the parents and the community in general was planned. This was initiated by holding several open house days when the parents were invited to visit the school and see the project in action. A large number of parents showed up during these days, approximately 150 representing a student population of 250. Many parents expressed a strong interest in the project, particularily in the area of crafts.

A meeting was set up between the school, the Band Council, the Department of Indian Affairs and the Northumberland and Durham County Board of Education to discuss organizing a series of evening classes on Indian Culture. An agreement was reached between the Department and the Board to co-sponsor a

series of evening classes in Indian Culture on a cost sharing basis. With the assistance of the Band Council members, instructors were approached and engaged from Curve Lake who would be able to instruct in the areas of Ojibway Language, leatherwork, beading and traditional Indian Dancing. The Board agreed to allow the classes to begin if a total of fifteen candidates, per class, signed up. After the registration night was over a total of 85 people had registered to take part in the programme. They varied frjom interested teenagers to grandmothers looking for an evening out. Each area had a mixture of people from Roseneath and Alderville.

During the winter months, ten sessions were held and the participants completed many worthwhile projects, learned to speak basic Ojibway and picked up some new dance steps. The fellowship shared in these sessions did much to overcome the suspicion and biases that some of the participants had concerning the members of the other ethnic group.

The intensive portion of the project for the students came to an end with a presentation of a POW WOW by the Primary grades consisting of songs, plays, and games related to Indian culture. The Senior classes presented Ruth Robert's operetta "The Legend of the Twelve Moons", using a cast of 120 students, complete with costumes and stage props.

The school has been noticeably changed as a result of the project. Physically there are some major changes; such as: framed Indian prints hanging throughout the school, as well as a large showcase containing artifacts and examples of Indian crafts.

During the winter term, the staff has had a chance to evaluate the project and suggest ways of improving upon it. One area that was found lacking was in the area of student evaluation. Since the pupils had spent a great deal of time with

other teachers it was difficult for homeroom teachers to assess their own classes. An evaluation committee was formed and each child was evaluated by all the teachers with whom he had come in contact. It was apparent that a much more structured evaluation system would need to be employed another time.

Since the project had stressed the basic cultures of the North American Indian, many interesting sidelights to the project evolved. Two Primary Classes studied the German Culture as many of the students in the school are of German descent. They used the basic format followed in the study of the Indian Cultures to guide their studies. The Senior grades examined the effects of the European culture on the Native cultures in their grade seven and eight history. It is hoped that this will eventually lead to an examination of the treaties and the Indian Act as they exist today.

During the winter of 1972, the Alderville Band received a local incentives grant from the Federal Government. A portion of this grant was alloted to the task of clearing the brush on East Sugar Island and preparing it for development as campsite and cottage lots. Archaeologists had shown interest in the island over the past years and for this reason it was suggested that a survey of the island be conducted before development took place.

The Royal Ontario Museum agreed to conduct the survey and an agreement between the Museum, the Band Council and the Roseneath Centennial School was entered into. The agreement gave the Museum the right to dig on the island provided that no grave sites were disturbed, the artifacts remained the property of the Band and that the children from the school were involved.

Dr. Walter Kenyon and his assistant, John Prideau, visited the island on May 1st to begin the survey. They were looking for a natural campsite and came ashore on the north-

west corner of the island. The first shovel full of sod revealed pottery and an arrowpoint.

Dr. Kenyon then laid this area out to be dug as a part of the survey. Once the necessary supplies and accommodations had been set up the students were brought to the island to begin the actual digging.

Each day, weather permitting, fifteen students from Grades 4 to 8 were brought to the island where they were met by Dr. Kenyon or one of his staff members. The students were assigned to various squares or other related tasks and put to work.

Within a few days it was obvious that this particular site had a long history of inhabitation and was of great importance to archaeology. Four distinct cultures ranging from an Iroquois culture of 600 years; through a Pickering culture of 1200 years; a Point Peninsula culture of 2200 years and an Archaic culture of at least 5000 years ago were found and identified.

The Archaic horizon proved most important as it represented a village site rather than a campsite. The artifacts collected were numerous and indicated that the people had not yet discovered ceramics.

The students learned about the cultures first hand as they examined the tools, broken pottery, cooking stones and bones from meals centuries ago. Dr. Kenyon took great pains in order to explain each artifact to the students. His descriptions of its manufacture and use brought the site alive with the activities that must have been a part of the daily life on the island long before history was written in a book.

By the end of June, the students had excavated 59 five foot squares to an average depth of eighteen inches, this exposed the archaic horizon across the whole site. Since school closed at the end of June it was agreed that a small crew of

people from the Museum would remain on the island to complete these squares and to protect the site from vandals.

Early in September the site had been completed. The artifacts were removed to the Museum for cleaning, cataloguing and evaluation. They were then returned to the school during the winter for display purposes.

The interest sparked by the dig lead the students into studies of ancient cultures around the world at times comparable to those on the island.

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This frank discussion of the problems and frustrations met by a school staff in implementing a programme in cross-cultural studies is an attempt by the writer to show how one school is meeting the unique needs of its community through innovations in the areas of community involvement, basic philosophy, school culture and curriculum. Although all the problems have not been resolved and a great deal of work still needs to be done, the title of this paper MAHJĒTAHWIN, "the beginning", indicates the spirit in which this task is being approached.

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